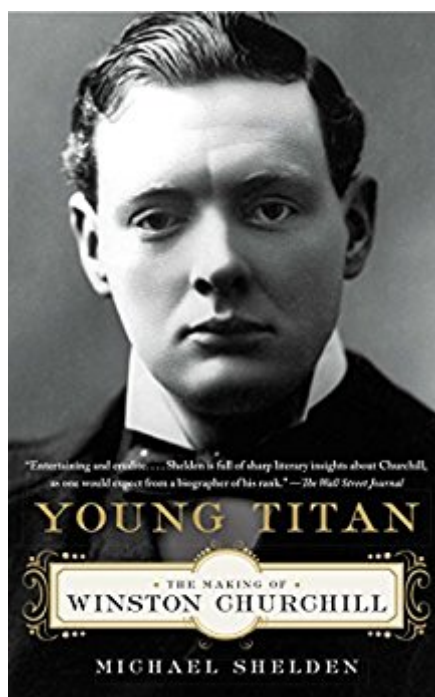


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Young Titan: The Making Of Winston Churchill



Synopsis

In modern memory, Winston Churchill remains the man with the cigar and the equanimity among the ruins. Few can remember that at the age of 40, he was considered washed up, his best days behind him. In *Young Titan*, historian Michael Shelden has produced the first biography focused on Churchill's early career, the years between 1901 and 1915 that both nearly undid him but also forged the character that would later triumph in the Second World War. Between his rise and his fall, Churchill built a modern navy, experimented with radical social reforms, survived various threats on his life, made powerful enemies and a few good friends, annoyed and delighted two British monarchs, became a husband and father, took the measure of the German military machine, authorized executions of notorious murderers, and faced deadly artillery barrages on the Western front. Along the way, he learned how to outwit more experienced rivals, how to overcome bureaucratic obstacles, how to question the assumptions of his upbringing, how to be patient and avoid overconfidence, and how to value loyalty. He also learned how to fall in love. Shelden gives us a portrait of Churchill as the dashing young suitor who pursued three great beauties of British society with his witty repartee, political flair, and poetic letters. In one of many never-before-told episodes, Churchill is seen racing to a Scottish castle to prepare the heartbroken daughter of the prime minister for his impending marriage. This was a time of high drama, intrigue, personal courage, and grave miscalculations. But as Shelden shows in this fresh and revealing biography, Churchill's later success was predicated on his struggles to redeem the promise of his youth.

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Customer Reviews

This book pleasantly surprised me. Having read a great deal on Churchill, I initially thought that this would be one of those "slice of life" books that rehashed everything said before, but with my interest in WSC and his having such a large life, allowing for many "slices" I bought it and thought I would skip through it and put it on the shelf. Silly me. Sheldon gives us a good summary of WSC's early life and his rise to power. The author's angle on this is to present information on a number of women that WSC fell in love with in his youth, some of whom did not return his affections, with the exception of two, his wife Clementine and his admirer, Violet Asquith, whose affection for Winston was not reciprocated. As for Pamela Plowden and Ethel Barrymore, I am not sure that they are important to the story, as Winston appears to have set his sights too high. The story of Muriel Wilson is more interesting but none of this compares, in my opinion, to the relationship with Violet Asquith, the daughter of the Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. It is through Violet (later Violet Bonham Carter, who published her memories of WSC in 1965) that we see not only a beautiful, intelligent young woman, but one who had her father's attention and worked diligently to advance the career of young Winston. Of course, we all know he ended up enchanted with Clementine Hozier after a meeting at a dinner party and married her. I think Violet would have made the more interesting companion, but Winston did not consult me. But through all this we get a much better understanding of her father, which is an interesting story in itself. Also of interest to me is the human side the author shows of Churchill's mother, the American Jennie Jerome Churchill.

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